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ABSTRACT

This paper states that the objectives of career education are entirely compatible with those of English teaching. The first section of the paper defines career education, indicates its broad scope and its relationship to all areas of education, and reports the results of a questionnaire sent to high school teachers, which indicated concern on the part of teachers in all areas--including English--for the objectives of career education. The paper then outlines specific ways in which English teachers can further these objectives. For example, it shows how teachers can use the study of literature--biography, fiction, and drama--to help students gain understanding of themselves and of career potentials, and briefly discusses "Macbeth" as an example of using drama to further career education objectives. Finally, the paper considers the story "A Mother in Mannville," by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, to illustrate the way a selection can be discussed to combine literary analysis with the development of career understandings. Discussion questions to use with the story are included. (GW)

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Career Education - More in English Than We May Have Thought

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A mere reference to Career Education is enough to send some English teachers I know into orbit. "That fad? -- Oh, that's just a Department of Education thing, like a lot of other THINGS. It'll go away. They'll get tired of it when the next thing comes along."

"Career Education? -- when am I supposed to teach it? What do I give up in what I teach now? -- Isn't it just another job for English teachers, like corridor duty and the school newspaper? What does it have to do with English, anyway?"

There is a lot of half-truth here. And half-truths, much like nuclear fission half-lives, have a way of surviving and demanding credibility. We have had more than enough educational faddism and gimmicks to deal with. Superintendents are notorious for making reputations and keeping jobs by following the will-o-the-wisp innovation, regardless of where it leads.

But the more familiar I have become with the objectives of Career Education, the more I have thought that my own earlier cynicism concerning many innovations in education has misled me in my earlier negative attitude toward Career Education. Perhaps we are reaching back toward something the former Boston Mechanic Arts School (today called the Boston Trade School) taught -- the concept of the gentleman artisan. Along with an excellent vocational training went a background in values, in expression and understanding, in literature, in languages, and above all an attitude toward other people, toward values, and toward pride in craftsmanship. This was the very highest goal of Career Education as proposed today -- and how many times I have heard Charles Lane Hanson, the venerable emeri-

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tus head of the English Department there until some time in the early 1940's, express his educational beliefs in similar words.

There has been real question as to who should teach Career Education. Should it be offered as a separate course or should it be "infused" into the existing courses? Is it the peculiar preserve of any particular department or departments? And how will teachers learn about Career Education themselves and be trained to teach it?

For the English teacher, I suspect that many of these concerns are not warranted. I suspect that English teachers have been teaching more about Career Education than any other teachers in their schools, and that they are better equipped than any other teachers to do an even better job. Some of the questions that may be raised about this conjecture can be resolved, I think, by clarifying questions of definition.

At the risk of boring some by going over familiar ground, and boring others by concentrating on definitions, I ask you to bear with me for what may seem to be a definitional splitting of hairs.

Career Education is taken -- and sometimes mistaken -- to mean a wealth of different things -- from vocational, to occupational, to career planning education. I have actually found it to be used for two highly specific purposes: first, to designate the whole area of teaching everything having to do with a career, from administering and interpreting an aptitude test, to vocational training; and, second, to designate that particular area having to do with self-identification, understanding values, understanding people, identifying skills, planning a career, finding out about occupations, identifying the right school for a career purpose, learning how to write a resume -- apply for a job -- interview -- change

jobs -- apply for unemployment compensation -- plan for retirement -- etc., etc. -- in other words, all the aspects of a career over and above occupational and vocational training.

Career Education is not learning about specific occupations -- Occupational Education is that.

Career Education is not learning a trade -- Vocational Education is that.

The vocational teacher will help many students in regard to vocations, and will frequently provide a direct and easy bridge to employment directly after graduation from a high school.

The guidance counselor will teach a lot about where to find information and how to plan a career. The counselor will offer tests and many resource materials. The counselor will assist in developing an educational plan, both within the school and for purposes of transition to another school.

But there is a tremendous area of understanding about self and about others, of considering values, attitudes, and goals, and how people become most truly effective and happy and find meaning in their careers, that is not covered in these formalized settings.

Personal contact with the classroom teacher, learning how to cope and to be productive in the classroom setting, developing a sense of values and an attitude toward work, and becoming familiar with the career possibilities related to the subject matter are elements in this broader area. In these, the English teacher shares with all classroom teachers. There can be no question that the English teacher does teach the most basic skills for career success and personal fulfillment: -- the skills of com-

munication. The English teacher provides groundwork in the writing skills for the future writer -- creative or commercial --, the editor, the publisher, and the teacher. But the English teacher offers far more, both in extent and in importance. Before I enter into this, which is really the heart of what I have to say, it might be a good idea to test what I have said already -- to enquire whether I am riding my own hobby horse into my own never-never land of Career Education. People can become overenthusiastic about things they are really interested in.

Kenneth Hoyt is the Director of the USOE Office of Career Education. We can regard him as the official governmental spokesman concerning Career Education. Among other contributions in his role, he has done a great deal to clarify and to explicate some of the early statements made by Sidney Marland, when he was Commissioner of Education and was attempting to get a program in Career Education off the ground. And he has also developed a description of Career Education that is far more acceptable to teachers in general, and, I think, far more workable than some of the earlier statements.

The Boston GLOBE reports him as making the following comments in a speech made at Boston University on July 17, 1977:

> In its broadest function, career education means providing general skills like logical thinking, effective communication and attitudes equipping people to get and change jobs.
>
> Adding career education programs to current curriculum would dilute academic skills and

> add unpopular costs. The view of the Office of Education is that training regular classroom teachers in general work practices so that they can weave this knowledge into their own subject matter is far more effective.

In another monograph entitled "The School Counselor and Career Education", he suggests the very broad scope of Career Education.

> The word "career" in the term "career education" includes unpaid work as well as the entire world of paid employment. As such, it includes an emphasis on lifelong learning, on volunteerism, on the wise and productive use of leisure time, and on social and occupational problems associated with the racism and sexism in our society. The counselor who seeks to avoid becoming involved with the "career" part of "career education" because he/she thinks it has only to do with the world of paid employment has missed a central part of the meaning of career education.

In a monograph entitled "Teachers and Career Education", Hoyt identifies the relationship of Career Education, as he sees it, to all of education.

> Two additional observations are equally important to emphasize here. First, education, as preparation for work, represents only one among several basic and fundamental goals of American Education. Thus, the use of career implications of subject matter as a source of educational motivation should be thought of as only one of a variety of ways in which teachers seek to help students find a sense of purpose and purposefulness in learning subject matter. Second, and related to the first, the presence of multiple goals for American Education makes it obvious that, when one considers all that is taught in classrooms, large segments are taught for purposes of attaining other worthy goals of American Education and so have no direct career implications whatsoever.

Later in this pamphlet, he describes a basic role all teachers play in establishing work habits and work values:

First, I believe career education urges the teacher to emphasize accomplishment-productivity-outcomes for all students. Factors making for productivity have been known for years. They are, in general, referred to as good work habits. They include encouraging each student to try, to do the best she or he can, to finish assignments, to cooperate with others, and to come to the work setting (the classroom) on time. I am one who believes the time has come to re-emphasize the practice of good work habits in the classroom and to reward those students who learn and practice them.

These quotations from the chief educational officer in the United States who is identified with Career Education go far to indicate that we are not dealing with a narrow interpretation and one person's "hobby horse"

In addition, a study I prepared in 1973, based on a questionnaire

sent to all teachers in the Needham Public Schools, tends to show a concern for the objectives of Career Education even before the school system had begun to promote a program. This study also tends to support the conclusion that the point of view I express is not unique.

Eighty-three per cent of the high school teachers responded to this questionnaire, including twenty of the twenty-one English teachers. From 86 to 100 per cent of the teachers in business, home economics, industrial arts, and guidance -- as might be expected -- felt that they developed awareness of the world of work. But half of the English teachers -- leading all of the academic subject matter departments -- felt the same thing. Half of the English teachers also felt that they helped to develop awareness of the student's own interests or abilities, surpassed only by the social studies teachers. Half also felt they helped to develop student skills and abilities, and were surpassed in this feeling only by the science teachers.

A summary of the narrative comments of English teachers "pointed out that occupational training in professional writing, journalism, media, and business forms and letters are included in English. For the most part, English teachers see themselves as offering basic preparation for life in terms of developing a life style, learning basic skills of communication, learning to get along with others, developing fundamental skills such as critical thinking, and developing attitudes and appreciation of the good things of life. They also see students learning how to explore career possibilities, develop a sense of the dignity of all work, and become aware of the nature of decision, especially as it affects career choice."

To review points made about the English teacher's role up to here,

then, the English teacher

-- teachers the skills of communication, which are basic to all learnings

-- teaches the writing skills that may lead to careers in journalism, free-lance or creative writing, editing, publishing, and teaching

-- teaches work skills and attitudes in the classroom

-- teaches understanding of self and understanding of others in this milieu.

Through the teaching of reading and of literature, however, the English teacher moves into a unique area. In the study of literature the English teacher leads students through an amazing and inexhaustible series of case histories of human interrelationships, of human endeavor, of human success and disappointment, -- of the entire human condition.

The school of hard knocks is said to provide the ultimate teachers; yet in the pages of literature the teacher of English can help the student to learn much about the human condition. The school of hard knocks, in fact, only rarely reproduces the learning situations that occur in literature -- the moments of crisis, the involvement of forces, or the particular intermingling of individuals that enable us to observe and to learn life's lessons in a realistic perspective.

Ever since mankind lost its innocence in the garden of Eden, according to the Biblical narrative, it has recognized that some kind of labor is an essential part of the human condition. Mankind's work is a part of life, as is its partner, play. The learning about the development of character, the understanding of values, the ability to work with others, the learning of skills, the ability to make basic decisions concerning

a life's work or career, the understanding of motivation (or ambition), and coping with changes in jobs, with unemployment, and finally with leaving the normal job activity for retirement, are all essential learnings about the human condition. Biography is concerned with these aspects, but so are fiction, drama, and poetry. The modern trend is to call this, as if it were a new discovery, Career Education. And the general opinion is that this teaching can best be done "infused" into the existing curriculum, rather than being superposed as a new subject.

As teachers of English, we all know that these aspects are not new. A slightly changed emphasis in what we have been doing all along finds us subtly teaching some of the most important aspects of Career Education, and also re-emphasising one source of motivation for reading literature. Career Education certainly is relevant.

Motivation, of course, is a key word in looking at our problem in education. Where students once were highly motivated by their families, we now increasingly find the family is not capable of motivating. There are so many "jobs" in the world that many young people feel just lost. Decreases in SAT scores are somehow correlated with this decrease in motivation. No great causes demand our attention, and, like Sputnik, motivate us beyond our immediate families or surroundings. But we can motivate the study of literature by relating it to understanding ourselves and our career potentials; and we can motivate an examination of career potentials through the lives we read about and study in literature. -- Did you hear me say that English was <u>the</u> solution to problems of motivation? I hope not. For I am suggesting one small step among many steps that can <u>help</u> in motivation. And being one small step, it can combine with others to

improve the entire picture of motivation.

In considering resources in written material, one should not, of course, omit reference to the obvious -- the "article" or nonfiction prose piece that describes a field of endeavor, a new discovery, or a specific occupation. This kind of nonfiction may appear in a magazine as a short piece or may be expanded to book length. It is difficult to justify describing this as literature, yet here are sources of direct information for young people when they want to know the "nuts and bolts" information about a field in which they are interested. Although the English teacher might wish to use some material of this kind in the classroom to point out how to make the best use of it in a strictly information-gathering context, the librarian or the guidance counselor would be better sources for recommendations as to extended occupational reading.

Biography is the most accessible literary genre for teaching about careers. Plutarch, the grandfather of all biographers, even developed a pattern of comparing his Roman and Greek subjects to analyze their relative strengths and weaknesses to show how they had developed them. Benjamin Franklin wrote, "From the poverty and obscurity in which I was born, and in which I passed my earliest years, I have raised myself to a state of affluence and some degree of celebrity in the world. As constant good fortune has accompanied me even to an advanced period of life, my posterity will perhaps be desirous of learning the means, which I employed, and which, thanks to Providence, so well succeeded with me. They may also deem them fit to be imitated, should any of them find themselves in similar circumstances." Hugh Roy Cullen, a more recent figure, wrote his story to show how he became enormously successful and wealthy. Many de-

votees of Elvis Presley read his life story in the tabloids to find his secret of success.

The teacher of biography may make use of many obvious questions about the talents one is born with, about the effects of home life and early experiences in molding character, about making adequate use of the great "break" when it comes, about developing skills, about the place of ambition, about getting along with people, etc., etc. Then there is the phase of evaluating the life, drawing lessons from it, and learning to apply the lessons to the individual.

While biographies are "real" case histories of careers -- or of elements in careers -- and are also taught with reference to understanding the point of view of the biographer, his selection of material, and his presentation of a possibly biased picture, fiction and drama offer another "level" in portraying people. From the beginning, the writer chooses and developes his characters in relation to the story he plans to tell, the theme he wishes to develop, or the atmosphere he wishes to create. This means, in turn, that he makes his characters case histories for his purposes. He frequently developes character and personality aspects that might not appear at all in a biography. He plans situations in which characters interact and respond in relation to the parts they play in the whole work. The teacher here can use questions to lead to an understanding of not only the author's techniques and style, but also of the characters and their motivations. These observations lead to a deeper understanding of people in career situations.

In fiction, the writer develops a story line, a setting, characters, and situations to project and support his theme. Unlike the biographer,

he has control over the work as a whole. The result is that frequently -- as is true, of course, in drama -- the author writes in a laboratory situation and portrays individuals acting and reacting according to the author's knowledge and experience -- thereby producing a kind of composite. Also, the author will project his opinion of how people would react and interact, and thereby introduce a speculative aspect into the examination of people. The teacher leads the student in a study of how the author uses language, style, experience, planning, observation, technique in his writing. Clues, foreshadowing, levels of meaning, irony are discussed and understood. Further, the teacher leads students into understanding and evaluation of what the author describes and what he says, and into an application to their own lives, to understanding themselves and others, to understanding decision making, perhaps to making some of their own life choices and to planning for their own futures. Fiction, even more than biography, lends itself to learning about self and the human condition, which is so much of the individual experience.

Let us look very briefly at MACBETH as an example of the involvement of drama. For years teachers have referred to tyrants of history or to modern dictators, such as Mussolini and Hitler, as historic or contemporary examples to demonstrate the reality of the situation in MACBETH -- and sometimes they have taken the additional step of using MACBETH as a laboratory example of the results of the excesses of ambition, the effects of pressures on the individual, and the responsibilities that power brings. The career implications are obvious; most teachers of MACBETH have been aware of them; many may not have realized how much they were teaching about career education in the broadest and most helpful sense. By simple

changes in emphasis, all can do an even better job of it.

To illustrate more specifically the way in which a shorter selection could be discussed to combine analysis of the writer's technique, the understanding of theme and character, the use of terms, and the relationship to career understandings, consider with me a short story that may be familiar to many of you -- "A Mother in Mannville", by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Any one of us in teaching this story will be using it in part because of its relevance to young people and their empathy with Jerry. Why not take the extra step to relate the story to self-awareness, developing character, developing skills, and showing responsibility, all of them elements in Career Education? There is no intent on my part, by the way, to "drive this into the ground"; as with much good teaching, the teacher will probably not use the terms, unless possibly in a summing up.

"A Mother in Manville" is a slow-paced little story, with the theme of revealing Jerry's character. An element of surprise is that the "mother" this little orphanage boy describes turns out to be his dream mother. But from some depth, or early indoctrination, or genetic heritage, or training at the orphanage -- or a combination of all these -- he had developed integrity, responsibility, compassion.

I suggest a lesson plan, which is included as an appendix and copies of which are available, for the teacher to follow. The first question could develop through observation and analysis how the author uses incidents to reveal Jerry's traits. The second could lead to discussion of how he possibly developed through practice, some of these traits and certain skills in chopping and stacking wood. The third invites a dis-

cussion of the author's comments on the meaning of courage and honesty. The fourth has to do with how the skills and the characteristics would influence his career plans and ambition, and what kind of man he might become. The fifth is a discussion of the author's comments on why people do certain things, such as performing "gracious acts". Then, a slight twist at the end, the question highlights the meaning of "irony" in comparing the author's feeling of relief after discovering that Jerry had a mother and the truth she discovered at the end of the story, that the mother was only a dream.

These questions, without overdoing anything, offer the basis for further discussion as the teacher senses the mood and the ability of the students. Important lessons in learning about self and in character building and skill development are an integral part of the learning and the discussion. Attention is drawn to responsibility and to some consideration of ambition. This has all been a feature of an integrated English learning experience. My guess is that many teachers in handling this selection already do all these things; they may not realize, however, how aptly they fit into the overall picture of Career Education.

Finally, in considering poetry in regard to Career Education, I have to say that with poetry, as with a good marriage, there comes a time when the curtain is discreetly drawn. A good poem makes its point. If Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" has a point; if Carl Sandburg's "Chicago" says something, who is to labor it? In the discussion of the poem as a poem, the points are observed and understood.

Yes, the teacher of English always has had a great deal to do with teaching values and the human condition as revealed through literature,

and this is the central stuff of what we today call Career Education. But if the teacher takes occasion to focus and to recapitulate from time to time, the teacher, the student, and the non-English faculty of the school may be a little surprised and pleased to see how much. Motivation for studying English can be heightened; a relevance that had not seemed to exist may suddenly seem to be. In other subject matter areas interest may be heightened in capitalizing on Career Education as a source of motivation in those areas. Through the English curriculum and teaching practices, a very natural emphasis on Career Education can become a non-threatening, non-burdensome aspect of teaching, rather than a time-consuming added curriculum.

Possible discussion questions for "A Mother in Mannville", by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

This story shows unusually clearly the interrelationship among character traits, skill-building ability, finding satisfaction in what one does, and assuming responsibility. The discussion questions, especially 2 and 4, can lead to an interesting analysis.

Quality in a person is the sum total of several more specific character traits. Discuss Jerry's traits by answering the following questions.

1. What trait is revealed by each of the following quotations?

   a. The blows were rhythmic and steady, and shortly I had forgotten him.... I suppose an hour and a half passed .... I stopped and stretched, and heard the boy's steps on the cabin stoop....
   b. An astonishing amount of solid wood had been cut. There were cherry logs and heavy roots of rhododendron, and blocks from the waste pine and oak left from the building of the cabin.
   c. "I'll split kindling tomorrow," he said over his thin ragged shoulder. "You'll need kindling and medium wood and logs and backlogs."
   d. When I left my bed in the cool morning, the boy had come and gone, and a stack of kindling was neat against the cabin wall.
   e. He made simple excuses to come and sit with me.

2. How do you suppose Jerry learned so much about cutting wood? Why was he so good at it? Do you see any connection between his character traits and his being so skillful?

3. What does the author mean by saying that integrity "is based on courage" but is "more than brave", is "honest" but "more than honesty"?

4. What kind of man do you think Jerry will become? What kind of ambition do you think he would have? Do you think he would be successful in terms of that ambition? Do you think he would be happy? Shy?

5. The author claims that gracious acts cannot be taught, "for they are done on the instant, with no predicated experience." Explain why you agree or disagree with her opinion.

6. After learning of Jerry's "mother," the author feels relieved that "he was not lonely." How does this assumption turn out to be ironic?

(courtesy of Ginn & Co.)